

A WAITING GOD AND A WAITING PEOPLE NO. 1766

**A SERMON
PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 17, 1884,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him.”
Isaiah 30:18.*

THE people were in a great hurry to be delivered from their enemies. The Assyrians had come up in great force, and were covering the land with their armies. They had already devastated the neighboring kingdom of Israel, and therefore the men of Judah were afraid that they would be swallowed up quickly, even as dry stubble is devoured by fire. The prophet bade the inhabitants of Jerusalem remain where they were, adding, “For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.” But they would not listen to the counsel of wisdom, they preferred to follow the suggestion of their fears, and go down into Egypt for shelter. They were impatient because they were unbelieving. They were slow to obey, but they were swift to rebel. Therefore the Lord cries to them by His prophet, “Woe to the rebellious children that take counsel, but not of Me.” They sent their princes as ambassadors to Zoan to entreat aid from the Egyptian king, yes; they sent a great treasure upon camels as a bribe to Pharaoh to espouse their cause against Assyria. They would not rely upon their God, and so they looked to the land of the viper and the fiery flying serpent, and were stung with bitter disappointment, for vapor and emptiness were the help of Egypt. It seemed as if the motto of the people then was, “We will flee upon horses; we will ride upon the swift.” Again and again Isaiah urged them to be quiet, saying, “Your strength is to sit still,” but they would not learn that rash haste is but ill-speed. They could not be quiet by reason of their fear and folly, but the Lord waited and turned not from His long-enduring patience. In the words of our text He showed that if mortals could not wait, yet their Maker could—“Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you,” and He assured them yet again that if they would learn to wait, they would find it their wisdom and happiness, for, “Blessed are all they that wait for Him.”

Here is the subject of this morning’s discourse. Certain of God’s people are in trouble and distress, and they are eager for immediate rescue. They cannot wait for God’s time, nor exercise submission to His will. He will surely deliver them in due season, but they cannot tarry till the hour comes. Like children, they snatch at unripe fruit. “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven,” but their one season is the present, they cannot, they will not wait. They must have their desire instantaneously fulfilled, or else they are ready to take wrong means of attaining it. If in poverty, they are in haste to be rich, and they shall not long be innocent. If under reproach, their heart ferments towards revenge. They would sooner rush under the guidance of Satan into some questionable policy, than in childlike simplicity trust in the Lord and do good. It must not be so with you, my brethren, you must learn a better way. I hope that the sermon of this morning may go some way, by God’s Spirit, towards instructing you in the holy art of waiting for the Lord. “Those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.”

The text divides itself into two parts, first, it introduces us to *a waiting God*, and then secondly, it speaks of *a waiting people*.

I. First, we have here A WAITING GOD. I shall not confine our illustration of this waiting on the part of God to the case of the men of Judah described in the text, but I shall come home to your own experience, and speak of how the Lord has waited, that He might be gracious *to you*. Let us behold His long-suffering towards ourselves. In so doing we shall not be leaving the Scripture, for the text as truly describes our own experience as that of the men of Isaiah’s day.

The word of the Lord which is now to be considered opens first with *a wonderful reason for waiting*, “And *therefore* will the Lord wait.” “Therefore”—mark that word! The Lord Jehovah does as He wills both in heaven and earth, and His ways are past finding out, but He never acts unreasonably. He does not tell us His reasons, but He has them, for He acts “according to *the counsel* of His will.” God has His “therfores,” and these are of the most forcible kind. Full often His “therfores” are the very reverse of ours, that which is an argument with us may be no argument with God, and that which is a reason with Him might seem to be a reason in the opposite direction to us. For what is there in this chapter that can be made into a “therefore”? “Therefore will the Lord wait.” From where does He derive the argument? Assuredly it is a reason based on His own grace, and not on the merit of man.

The chapter contains a denunciation of the false confidences of the people, and because of these one might have concluded that the Lord would cast them off forever. If they will have Egypt to lean upon, let them lean on Egypt, till like a spear it pierces their side. God might well say, “Let them alone; they are given to their idols,” instead He cries, “Therefore will the Lord wait.” He will let them see the result of their carnal confidences, He will allow them time in which to test and try Egypt, and see whether Egypt is not a boaster whose help is to no purpose. Do you not remember when it was so with you? Perhaps you began your religious life with the great mistake of hoping to find salvation in your own goodness. You looked to your feelings, prayers, works and professions for safety. You thought that your deliverance must come from yourself, and so you sought to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” without remembering that “it is God that works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” You knew nothing of God’s grace; you thought much of your own good works. So many prayers and tears, so many church-goings or chapel-goings, so much of sacraments, almsgivings, and the like, and this would make up a sweet-smelling sacrifice, acceptable to God. Blessed be the Lord who had great patience with you. He had told you plainly enough beforehand that by the works of the law there should no flesh be justified in His sight, and you ought not to have tried that forbidden way, but as you would try it, He suffered you to run therein till a gulf opened before you. You worked out a plan of self-salvation, and the net result was bitter disappointment, for you saw that you could not keep the law, and you felt also that if you did keep it your obedience would make no recompense for the sins of the past. You perceived that the wrath of God was your righteous due. An abyss yawned before you, you dared not go further, and neither could you trust the sandy ground upon which you stood. You were in great distress of mind, and it was for this that the Lord had in mercy waited. I heard some time ago of a man who rented horses and carriages. A person wished to hire, and having heard the price, he went around the little town to all other persons in that line of business to get something cheaper, but as he did not succeed, he returned to the first person and said he would hire his horse and carriage. “No,” said the other, “I am not going to let you have it. I know why you have come to me, you have been around everywhere else, and if you could have saved a shilling you would not have come to me.” I do not commend the tradesman, but I do not much wonder at his conduct. See how much more patience there is in God than in man. We refuse His free salvation, and go around by way of our own merits, and everywhere else, to try and find some other ground of confidence, and then at last, when everything has broken down, we come back to God and to salvation through Jesus Christ, and yet we find the Lord lovingly waiting, graciously waiting—a God ready to pardon.

Further, these people were rebels against God, and the Lord was waiting to let them fully manifest their rebellious spirit, and be made ashamed of it. The chapter begins that way, “Woe to the rebellious children.” Further on He calls them, “a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord”—was that a reason for waiting to be gracious? Yes, with the Lord, sin shows the need of grace, and so becomes a reason for grace. The Lord allowed the people to show their rebellious character—to let all mankind know what kind of people God had to deal with, and that they might in later days have the higher admiration of His long-suffering and of His grace. I think the Lord permits many sinners to go to the full length of their tether in order that they may know in the future what stuff they are made of, and may never trust in themselves. Those who from their youth up have been under restraint, do not know the evil of their own hearts and are apt to think that they can scarcely be heirs of wrath even as others. But those who have developed their innate depravity by actual sin dare not dream such proud falsehoods, for their actual sins would cry them down if they did so. When the Lord leaves us to ourselves awhile and just stands back, and lets us have our spin, what pretty creatures we are! Ah

me, it makes us blush to remember all! In later years we have to bemoan ourselves, and distrust ourselves, and to admire the measureless bounty of the grace which chose us, and would not alter its choice notwithstanding all our unseemliness. A strange "therefore" is God's, "therefore"—"therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious," that the abundant display of the sin within the man may lead to a more thorough and hearty confession of his fault, and to a greater admiration of the splendor of the grace which puts that sin away.

The Lord would wait again for yet another reason, namely, to let them suffer somewhat of the effect of their sin. He permitted them to send their ambassadors to Egypt, that they might come back disappointed, and He allowed the Assyrians to devastate the land, that they might feel the pinch of famine, and learn that it is an evil and a bitter thing to forsake the living God. It has a purifying effect upon men to let them bathe in the bitter waters which flow from the foul fountain of their iniquity. It is well that they should see what kind of serpent is hatched from the egg of evil. Perhaps some of us were left in the same way, and we shall never forget what we thus learned. We were allowed to go on in sin, and we did so until we began to feel the result of it, and now we flee from it with horror. We put our hand into the fire until it was burned, and now we dread the fire. The quittance of self, the abhorrence of sin, the clinging to the Lord, which come out of our miseries, are all precious, and therefore does the Lord wait to be gracious—wait until we set a just value upon that grace, and have a due horror of the sin from which it delivers us.

Once more, I do not doubt that the Lord waited in this case to be gracious until the people should begin to pray, for that seems to be the turning point in this affair. The prophet says, "He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer you." The Lord is listening for the sinner's prayer. How is it that you have not prayed long ago, O troubled spirit? Why have those lips been dumb for years? What, with all your sense of sin, and with a clear idea of the misery that will come of it, have you yet refused to pray? Then you may well wonder that the Lord should wait. It is a marvel that He should have any patience with a prayerless soul. The open display of His grace in your soul in the form of pardoned sin will not appear to you until it is said, "Behold, he prays." Why, then, are you so slow to cry to Him? If mercy is to be had for the asking, what shall become of the man who never asks? If God says, "Only acknowledge your transgressions," what must be the fate of him who will not acknowledge his transgressions? If the Lord sets mercy's door before us, and writes over it, "Knock and it shall be opened unto you," how can we be excused if we do not knock at once? And yet such was my condition once, and such was yours, my brethren in Christ. We did not feel the guilt of our sin, we would not acknowledge that we had erred, we did not recognize the misery that sin brought upon us, we did not pray, we did not seek the Lord through Jesus Christ. Yet all that long while the Lord of mercy waited that He might be gracious to us, and the reason why He should have exercised such forbearance and long-suffering is hard to see until we look into the goodness of His heart, until we see in the heart of His compassion the deep fountains of love from which rivers of mercy flow. Behold how the heart of God yearns towards His people. Was it ever more clearly seen than in His long forbearance, His waiting to be gracious unto us?

This leads us to notice, in the second place, *the singular patience of God in that waiting*. What does it mean when we are told that the Lord waits that He may have mercy upon us? It means that He kept back the sword of justice. It is inevitable that where there is evil, God shall be angered with it. It is not a matter of arbitrariness with Him, but it is inevitable that the Judge of all the earth should take vengeance upon evil and wrong. God must punish sin; this is one of the fixed and settled principles of His very existence. Here the attribute of long-suffering patience comes in and spares the guilty from time to time, giving space for repentance. Justice waits awhile, that love may try her hand, and bring the rebel to a better mind. With some of us, the Lord must have drawn the sword right out of the scabbard, and yet He put it back again into the sheath, bidding it be quiet a little longer. With some of us the Lord must have lifted up the axe to cut us down, for we have been such cumberers of the ground, and yet His mercy has stayed His justice, and the axe has been laid by, and all for mercy's sake. Because of the intercession of the Lord Jesus, the Lord has let the lifted thunderbolt drop, and here we are still the living, the living, I trust, to adore our long-suffering God. There are some dear friends before me who must forever highly honor the forbearance of God in sparing them through so many years of sin, till at last their grey heads bowed before His grace. It would have been easy enough for God to have destroyed them when they

were running riot in their youth; yes, easier to destroy them than to spare them. Have not some of you been in positions where, if you had been killed, it would have seemed only according to the order of nature that you should be? But your being spared was a miracle of providence, a special interposition of goodness. The brand in the fire will be consumed by being left alone, but if it is to escape it must be plucked from the burning. Well, then, bless that God who waited, and held back the punishment that was due to you! Bless the Judge who was so slow to call you to account, who postponed the day of trial, yes, and issued a reprieve, to let you live when you were condemned already.

This patience of God signifies more however, than delay in punishment, it means *the continuance of privileges*, for the Lord told these people that, although He might give them the bread of adversity and the water of affliction on account of their sins, yet He would not take away their teachers from them anymore, they would still be instructed, and warned, and invited to come to Him. Now, if God were to send a word of mercy to a man once, and that man willfully refused His message, it would be perfectly just on God's part if He said, "I will never send another ambassador! It was condescension on My part to invite this rebel to be at peace with Me, and since he declines to do so, he has made his choice of war, and surely I will contend with him. As he has made his bed, so he shall lie in it. As he prefers to be My enemy, so let him be to his own destruction." Ah me, how long does mercy linger! How earnestly she pleads with men to be kind to themselves! Instead of hasty wrath against His people when they rejected His word, the Lord sent prophet after prophet to them, and when they stoned one and slew another, He even sent His own Son, saying, "They will reverence My Son." Still did the heralds of salvation cry, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die?" Has it not been so with some of us? We heard the gospel when we were quite young, and we have continued to hear it till we are quite old, so patient is the Lord. It may be that I speak to some who have continued to hear that gospel every Sabbath, and have determinedly refused it throughout a long life. Shall it continue to be so? Dare we always provoke the Lord? Still the white flag is hung out, and the silver trumpet knows no note but, "Mercy, mercy, mercy!" Oh that man would hear that note and turn to the Lord! O, my brethren, the man who loves not the Lord Jesus, is already "Anathema Maranatha!" All holy intelligences say, "Amen" to his being held accursed, and yet the Lord permits him to tread His courts and hear His word, and gives him space in which to repent of his evil deeds. He waits that He may be gracious unto you, therefore He bids His ministers wait upon you in hope, and proclaim to you over and over again the loving-kindness of the Lord.

So singular was God's patience that He even *increased His holy agencies* to lead the people to Himself. He says—"Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk you in it.'" Do we not remember how when their public ministry seemed to miss us, we began to be stirred by an inward force more powerful than visible ministries? Conscience cried aloud and accused us from within doors. I remember well when it dogged my heels wherever I went, it would not be at peace with me until I was at peace with God. Do you not remember in your own case when it began to be very hard to sin? The drags were clapped on and you could not gallop down the hill as you wished to do? You found it hard to kick with naked feet against the sharp pricks of conscience. You found it difficult to go to hell, you had to leap fence, and rail, and ditch, and you were tired of such steeple-chasing. The voice of Jesus from without seemed echoed from within. You could hardly tell where the voice came, but it was always following and crying, "This is the way, walk you in it." O the devices of infinite love! What patience was shown by the Lord to send this inward monitor. Why did He not say, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them"? Though we had Moses and the prophets, the Scriptures to read, and the gospel to hear, yet, He added to all this the still small voice. In addition to a summons from without, He added a pleader within. Did we contend against even this? Alas, we did, for we seemed determined to destroy ourselves. Behold what manner of patience the Lord has exercised towards us according to the abundance of His grace.

No, this is not all, for all this while God was *passing by our rejections of Him*, blotting out our sinful refusals, and insulting despising of His goodness. You know how it would be even with your own child, if you were to say to him, "My child, I am ready to forgive you if you will confess your fault." If he would not acknowledge that he was wrong, but held out stubbornly, you might have considerable patience, but I question if that patience would last for days and weeks. Your rod would soon be spoken with. Men that have been very famous for bearing insults have at last been compelled in vindication of their own honor, to put an end to the provocation. How grievously far have you and I carried our insults

of God! Do I not speak to some who are carrying the provocation a long way even now? You will not accept the Son of God by whom alone you can be saved. To save you it was necessary that Jesus should die, but you trample on His blood. It was not possible for you to enter heaven unless the Lord Jesus should be your substitute and bear your sin, and you have heard all about that wonderful truth, and have yet acted as if it were nothing to you. You have not believed on Jesus, you have rejected the Father's testimony concerning Him, and resisted the witness of the Spirit of God. This you have done for many a day. The tears have started in your eyes, but you have wiped them away, and they have gone as the dew of the morning disappears in the heat of the sun. You have at times been driven to your chamber and to your knees, but you have forgotten your hurried prayer, and again the dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. This cannot always last; men cannot always thrust their fingers into God's eyes at this rate. The wonder is that it has lasted so long.

Please remember that all this while God has been waiting but *everything has been ready*, ready for the sinner to come to Him. Listen to the divine word—"My oxen and My fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." Alas, they would not come. So it was with us, who are now brought in to enjoy the provisions of grace, and so it is with many who are still outside the banquet hall—they do despite unto the love and mercy of God, and the provision of His boundless grace. Of multitudes Jesus says sorrowfully, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." I wish I could better set forth the singular waiting of the Lord that He may have mercy upon us, but I pray the Holy Spirit to bless my feeble utterances to all that hear me this day.

I must now notice *a most remarkable action which follows upon the waiting*. After the Lord had displayed His patience to His people, He resolved to go further, and He proceeded to a most notable matter which is thus described—"Therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you." You and I would have turned the text round the other way and said—"Therefore will He have mercy upon you, that He may be exalted," that would be true, but it is not the truth here taught. The picture represents the Lord as it were, as sitting still, and allowing His people through their sin, to bring suffering upon themselves, but now, after long patience, He awakens Himself to action. I think I hear Him say, "They will not come to Me, they refuse all My messengers, they plunge deeper and deeper into sin, now will I see what My grace can do!" He rises as one who means to put forth His power. He stands ready for action. And now, as if that were not enough, He says to Himself, "I will be exalted. I will go up to My throne that I may have mercy upon them. I will manifest My power. I will take the ensigns of My dominion into My hand, and act as a sovereign. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and where sin abounded grace shall much more abound." Oh, how I love to speak of the Lord exalted in Christ Jesus upon the throne of grace. Glory be to His name. Do you see what a wonderful thing is the work of grace in saving men—"Therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you." He will take to Himself an absolute sovereignty, mount to the throne, and display His reigning grace. Where else is there any hope for men?

It also bears this meaning. When a man is about to deal a heavy stroke, he lifts himself up to give the blow, he exalts himself to bring down the scourge more heavily upon the shoulder. Even so the Lord seems to say, "I will put forth all My might. I will exercise all My skill. I will display all My attributes up to their greatest height, that I may have mercy upon these hardened, stiff-necked sinners—I will be exalted that I may have mercy upon them." As if He would in some way, make His greatness to be more illustrious than it had ever been seen before, by doing the most splendid act He had ever done, namely, by having mercy upon these provoking sinners for whom He had been waiting so long.

Oh, but this is a surpassingly glorious text! I remember thinking, "Surely, if God saves me, He will be a God, indeed!" He did save me because He is a God, indeed. Here is the proof of it, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God." Because He is God He saves those who look to Him. Somebody here says, "Well truly, if the Lord were to crown His patience by bringing me to Himself I should think more of His glorious grace than ever I have done before." Just so, and He means to make you think after that manner. Our Lord intends to make you stand at His feet weeping, as that woman did who had been a sinner, and who so loved Him that she washed His feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, because she had sinned much and much had been forgiven. Jesus loves to make converts like these. "Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!" is a fit speech for a great sinner. But how can we magnify the Lord? He is infinitely great already, how can we

magnify Him or make Him great? We can do it by our thoughts—we can greater Him in our own esteem and in the esteem of our fellow men. We can cry out in wonder at His exceeding mercy—"Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?" We never cry out, "Who is a God like unto You?" until we see Him forgiving sin. Then is He robed in a glory excellent and surpassing. The Lord is exalted when He has mercy upon sinners in Christ Jesus, because by this deed of grace He glorifies every attribute, reveals His wisdom, displays His power, honors His justice, and displays His love. His power is more resplendent in saving souls than in making worlds. His justice is more honored in the sacrifice of Christ than in sending offenders to hell, and His love is more resplendent than is all the gifts of His Providence. If you would see the Sun of righteousness at seven times its ordinary strength, behold it shining with grace and truth upon men who deserve to be thrust into outer darkness. If God has magnified His own name in our salvation, let us magnify it too. O you saints of His, remember forever that word, "His glory is great in your salvation: honor and majesty have you laid upon Him."

One thing more before I leave this waiting God, and that is, *there is a final success to all this waiting*. When the waiting turns to a glorious transaction of grace upon the sinner's heart and conscience, then the time of love has come. Observe that it is written, "He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry." When God has waited for the soul, that soul is brought to wait on Him, God's patience is not in vain towards His chosen. When God deals with His redeemed, He does not deal in vain. The Almighty is not defeated. Jehovah is an omnipotent God, He works out His own pleasure upon men, and we see Him by His patience and grace, causing men to pray, yes, and to weep. That is implied in the 19th verse—"They shall weep no more"—then they did weep till He forgave. Their tears and prayers are flowing, for He declares, "He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry." Now also they listen eagerly to the gospel, for they count it a privilege that "their teachers shall not be removed into a corner any more." They value their ministers, and look at them with careful love, as it is here written, "Your eyes shall see your teachers." Those whom they formerly despised they now esteem and delight in. They begin also to obey the voice of the Lord, for they hear the voice behind them saying, "This is the way." This great change comes to transgressors when God deals with them in His own effectual manner; then they mourn for sin, then they pray for mercy, then they listen with attentive ears to the message of love, and then they bow themselves down before the present God, and desire nothing so much as to be at peace with Him.

Meanwhile, one of the chief and most evident tokens of their change is their casting away of the sin they formerly loved. "You shall defile also the covering of your graven images of silver, and the ornament of your molten images of gold: you shall cast them away as a menstrual cloth. You shall say unto it, Get you hence." See what free grace can do? It is no enemy of holiness, but the direct cause of it. The love of God reigning in the heart makes a man hate his sin. God never forgives sin without making us forsake sin. When *He* casts our sins into the depths of the sea, He causes us to do the same. When the Lord says to our sin, "Be gone from My memory," we say to it, "Be gone from my heart." Repentance, faith, holiness, and zeal, all follow upon the effectual working of divine grace. Oh, that all of you were under its power.

Forever blessed be the Lord who waits to be gracious, and then, being gracious unto us, makes us gracious, and causes us to bring forth the fruits of righteousness to His honor and praise.

II. Now learn the lesson of the whole subject. Under our second head we have A WAITING PEOPLE—"Blessed are all they that wait for Him."

God's waiting people wait *upon God only*. They are not trusting to the arm of flesh, nor looking to the changeable creature. They do not rely upon themselves, nor depend upon their own experiences, or their mental acquirements. Here is their song—

*"My spirit looks to God alone;
My rock and refuge is His throne;
In all my fears, in all my straits,
My soul on His salvation waits."*

Dear friends, you can judge whether you are the people of God or not by this—Can you say, "My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him"? "Trust you in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

God's waiting people *wait upon God expectantly*. They are looking for everything from Him, for He is their all in all. They have had a great deal from God, but they expect more from Him. They swim in a river of grace already, and they are floating on to an ocean of glory. They know that they have nothing in themselves, but they rejoice that they have everything in their God. Every morning they see that the light for the day comes from above, and so for spiritual things they lift up their eyes to the hills, where their help comes from. They are not waiting in despair, or even in hesitation. They are waiting in hope, a joyous and assured hope of blessedness in reserve. They confidently expect to find their way in the Lord grow brighter and brighter, and still brighter, from the twilight of the morning to the shining of the perfect day. Oh, my brethren, let us wait and watch even as men look for the dawn, because they know that it will not fail them.

"But," you ask "*what are they waiting for?*" I answer; God's people are waiting upon Him patiently for many things. Sometimes they wait for the tokens of His grace, they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet they may not for the moment enjoy the peace and comfort which are theirs by faith. If they had more faith their peace would at once be as a river, but it is well if they have faith enough to wait for that peace. At times faith may be very weak, and then it is well if it clings and abides in its place. A man may believe and be saved, and yet he may not be sure of his own salvation, nor discern the safety and blessedness of his condition in Christ Jesus.

Oh soul if you cannot get out of the dark, believe in the dark. If you have light enough just to look to Christ by faith, though you cannot perceive all His beauties and His glories, yet remember you are bid to look, and are saved by looking, however dim the light may be. If you can but look to the cross so as to trust wholly to the Lamb of God, He has taken away your sin. All the joy of the Lord, and all the peace and all the rest that come of faith do not come at once, but you must wait for them. These are the ripe ears of corn, and you must plow in hope and sow in faith, before these can be reaped. The graces of the Christian character, the assurance of faith, the strength of courage, the mellowness of experience, all these are peaceable fruits of righteousness which will come in their season and not before. Surely some of the Lord's people appear to attain to joy and peace at once, and keep it all their days. These are favored indeed. I wish that we were in the same case, but if we are not, let us not despair, but still trust in the Lord our Righteousness—

*"And when your eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus—sink or swim:
When darkness fills your inmost soul,
Still all your griefs on Jesus roll."*

If He has never yet given you a comfortable word, still cling to Him as she did whom He likened to the dogs, but whom yet replied, "Truth, Lord. Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." It is yours to look to Christ; it is His to give you light. If your face as yet is not lightened, yet keep it towards the sun, even Jesus the Lord. "Who is among you that fear the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, and that walks in darkness and has no light? Let Him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon His God." It must in the end be well with the man who trusts in God and waits for Him, yes, it is well already, for the Lord in our text pronounces all such to be blessed, and blessed they are. Let us wait for those spiritual delights and inward joys which are the portion of believers, and if they come not immediately, let us solace ourselves with this present benediction—"Blessed are all they that wait for Him."

You have read of those charming seasons which are enjoyed by choice saints in communion with Jesus, and you have said, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" Trust you well and wait, for the Lord will reveal Himself to you. Possibly you are looking back to your own past history and sighing—

*"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!"*

Those years which the locust has eaten shall be restored to you, only be hopeful, trustful, and obedient. Lean heavily upon your God. It is a poor faith which only believes as far as the eye can see. Believe that your Lord loves you when He smites you; believe that He loves you though He slay you. Do not doubt the Lord nor limit Him. He cannot change. Hang on His arm even when He lifts it to chasten you. If you cannot rejoice in the light of His countenance, yet rest in the shadow of His wings. Yes, we must be a waiting people, and assuredly we may not complain, for we caused the Lord to wait for us many a day. What patience He has had! Cannot we be patient?

Sometimes God's people have to wait for the fulfillment of His promises. Every promise will be kept, but not today nor tomorrow. God's word has its due season, and His times are the best times. We may also have to wait for answers to our prayers. Prayer will be heard, yes, it is heard the moment it is uttered, but it may not be answered just yet. The bread cast on the waters of prayer will be found again, but it may not be till after many days. Watch unto prayer, if it is long that you have sought a favor from your God. Wait upon the Lord and so renew your strength. There is a benefit even about hungering and thirsting when it is for the bread of heaven, and the wine of the kingdom. Pray on! Wait on! Knock, and if the door is not opened, knock again, and if the door is still closed, knock again with greater earnestness than before. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." If your importunity is worked up to the pitch of enthusiasm, it shall be well with you, for "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force."

Frequently we may have to wait for temporal blessings. It may not be safe for us to obtain the desire of our heart, because our heart is as yet too much occupied with the world and the things thereof. We may have to wait for deliverance from trouble, for as yet the furnace may not have accomplished its refining work. You may be ill, and you may pray God to make you well, but He may still allow His beloved to be sick, to you sickness may be healthier than health. You are very poor, and you would like to struggle out of abject poverty. By all means struggle on, but do not murmur if you should not be successful, poverty may be a richer state for you than wealth. There may be something in your character which cannot be perfected except by suffering and labor, and it is better that your character be perfected than your substance increased. None of us can come to the highest maturity without enduring the summer heat of trials. As the sycamore fig never ripens if it is not bruised, as the corn does not leave the husk without threshing, and as wheat makes no fine flour till it is ground, so are we of little use till we are afflicted. Why should we be so eager to escape such benefits? We shall have to wait with patience, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." He waited to give grace to us, let us wait to give glory to Him.

Brothers and Sisters, wait cheerfully. If God sees fit to say, "Wait," do not be angry with Him. Why give way to hurry and worry? O rest in the Lord. Your strength is to sit still. One of the loveliest flowers of the new creation is entire submission to the divine will; he who has it is not far from heaven. Yet you will have to wait a little for glory which is yours by a covenant of salt. Do you not at times suffer a heavenly homesickness? Do you not grow weary of these wildernesses, and long for the mountains of spices, and the gardens of the blessed? Do you not long for the wings of a dove? I am afraid you would not manage them if you had them, dove's wings would hardly suit this cumbrous clay. It is not easy to long for heaven and yet to wait. Yet we are better where we are than attempting to fly where the Lord has not called us. Wait, for there is yet more business to be done for your Master. Would you go to your rest before your day's work is fairly finished? Wait, for it is necessary for others, if not for yourself. Wait and work on! How many years were wasted before you came into the vineyard? How little have you accomplished since! Wait! For the vision of glory is sure, as sure as though it were tomorrow, or today at this very hour—

*"Heaven is nearing! How much further?
Count the milestones one by one!
No, no counting—only waiting
Till the glory has begun."*

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 30:1-26.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—27, 248, 590.**

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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